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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000711

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNFICYP](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: STONEWALLING ON UN-BROKERED CYPRUS TALKS

REF: A. NICOSIA 256
[1](#)B. ANKARA 588
[1](#)C. ANKARA 57

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Turkey's MFA characterizes recent Greek Cypriot steps to re-start UN-brokered talks and to facilitate a re-opening of the Ledra Street crossing of the Green Line in central Nicosia as "just for show." The GOT believes G/C President Papadopoulos is feeling pressure from the EU and is doing whatever he can to alter his image as an obstructionist, with no intent of actually following through with genuine dialogue. Meanwhile, they describe "TRNC President" Talat as "nervous" and concerned about being pressured to move forward with the UN talks without agreed terms of reference. As Turkey nears presidential elections next month and parliamentary elections later in the year, hot-button nationalist issues such as Cyprus have taken on even greater significance. As a result, the ability of Talat and the Turkish Cypriots to maneuver is likely to remain severely constrained, with GOT officials demonstrating little creativity on how to get Cyprus talks back on track. END SUMMARY

G/C Moves Just "For Show"

[1](#)2. (C) Charge met March 26 with MFA Deputy Under Secretary for Northeast Mediterranean and Americas Haydar Berk about the latest snag in moving ahead with UN-brokered talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Berk's recent visit to the island and his meetings with "TRNC President" Talat and others. Berk claimed the GOT continues to support the UN process, though he emphasized that Talat, Perdev and others suspect the ROC's latest steps are merely "for show" in order to reduce EU pressure on Nicosia.

[1](#)3. (C) Berk dwelled on Talat's concern that the Greek Cypriots will want to initiate a discussion on the property issue in the technical committees, then point to T/C intransigence when they refuse to engage on an issue they believe should more rightly be covered in the expert working groups as one of the issues to be resolved under a comprehensive settlement. He admitted there had been hope within the GOT and in Northern Cyprus that Papadopoulos' recent initiative was a sign of a new level of flexibility on the G/C side. However, as discussions continued, Berk claimed it became clear that the Greek Cypriots were summarily dismissing T/C concerns regarding the property issue and their expectation that working group and technical committee titles would accurately reflect what the Turkish Cypriots thought should be discussed (e.g. power-sharing when discussing "governance"; security guarantees for the T/C community when discussing "defense").

How To Get Back on Track?

14. (C) Charge responded that Papadopoulos' recent moves had, in our view, been successful in painting Talat as the intransigent party, and suggested it would be in Talat's best interest to agree to move forward with UN talks. Doing so could facilitate progress, if only incremental, and help insulate the Cyprus issue from the mad dash to capture the nationalist vote that currently characterizes the Turkish political scene. Charge also noted the perception that the Turkish military had taken a much harder line on Cyprus-related issues in recent months and said this was both unnecessary and unhelpful.

15. (C) Berk acknowledged Turkey's electoral politics complicate matters with regard to Cyprus, but instead emphasized the GOT view that political steps on Cyprus should be reciprocal and simultaneous. He referred to Talat's decision in December to remove the Ledra Street footbridge, noting that Talat had pressed hard to accomplish it. However, because the move had not been reciprocal, Papadopoulos' latest initiative, which in Turkish eyes merely "catches him up" with the T/C position, now raises the expectation that Talat must do more or else be seen as the intransigent party. This despite the fact, according to Berk, that the T/C concerns associated with the UN talks noted above have not been addressed.

16. (C) Responding to our question on how Ankara hoped to move the process forward, he said that Talat was "more nervous than we expected" during their March 17-18 visit to the island and unlikely to overcome his concerns. Talat wished to "re-evaluate the entire process" before deciding how to proceed. Berk also expressed the view that if the USG could take "two or three bold steps" (e.g. allow direct flights between Ercan airport and U.S. POEs), it would help to

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pressure Papadopoulos to take more seriously the need to engage with Talat as an equal partner. Charge outlined steps the USG has already taken to help alleviate the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and said the focus now should be managing the situation and keeping the technical talks on track -- not waiting for a grand initiative from the U.S.

17. (C) COMMENT: As noted ref c, TGS has laid down markers that it sees itself as the ultimate protector of Turkish national interests, including (or especially) Cyprus. The GOT, or at least senior levels at MFA, appear to have little stomach for inserting themselves in a Cyprus issue that has always been a lightning rod for Turkish nationalists. The debate swirling around Turkey's presidential election process -- and the degree to which nationalist issues have moved to the center of that debate (ref b) -- makes it all the more likely that Talat and the Turkish Cypriots will have little room to maneuver. Despite our continued arguments (and the inherent logic) in support of continued T/C engagement in UN talks, we see little prospect for Turkish concurrence.

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